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ABSTRACT

In fall 1987, the public information office at Kishwaukee College conducted a survey to determine the type and quantity of local newspaper coverage received by the college in relation to the amount of informational material the office supplied. Nine newspapers were monitored over an 8-week period to track the appearance of news stories, special events publicity, "hometown" news releases, announcements of meetings, classroom/campus features, human interest articles, personality profiles, promotional pieces, photographs, and miscellaneous items. For the same period, the office also kept track of the number of press releases sent per week to each paper, the type of article that was sent, the disposition of each release from week to week, the way the article was handled (e.g., inserted as received, condensed, or not published), and the ratio of articles published to releases submitted by type of press release. Study findings included the following: (1) the public information office produced and mailed 48 separate articles, including five photographs with captions, during the 8-week period; (2) the office mailed a combined total of 247 pieces of information, or slightly under 27.5 releases per week to the nine newspapers; (3) two newspapers, including a daily paper and a biweekly paper, used more than 75% of the releases they received; (4) the weekly newspapers used an average of 25% of the releases they received; (5) of the 95 articles about the college that were published, only 36% were edited by the newspapers before appearing in print; and (6) the papers showed a preference for publishing "hometown" releases and timely news stories, while releases which sought to promote the college's programs and services were rarely used. (AAZC)

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ED300098

REPORT ANALYZING DATA COLLECTED IN A SURVEY OF NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE

Edward M. Stoyanoff
Information Services Director
Kishwaukee College

Fall/Winter 1987

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OFFICE OF
PUBLIC INFORMATION

September 10, 1987

MEMO To: Planning Committee, Kishwaukee College Marketing Council

From: Ed Stoyanoff, Director of Public Information

Subject: Research study on press coverage

The Office of Public Information has been urged to conduct a study of content from Kishwaukee College, appearing in selected area newspapers. We are pleased to comply with this request.

The following is an outline of what we propose to do:

Time Frame

We will gather our data over the course of an eight-week period, beginning on Thursday, October 1, 1987 and continuing through Wednesday, November 25, 1987.

Survey results will undergo a close analysis and a report will be prepared, ready for presentation to any interested parties within the institution, following completion of the data-collection phase of the project.

Survey for Study of Contents

Our research will focus on the amount of coverage the College receives (vis a vis, the amount of informational material we supply) in a total of nine (9) newspapers. In each case these are publications whose circulation includes many residents of the Kishwaukee College district.

These papers included in our study are, as follows:

1. DeKalb Chronicle (daily)
2. Rockford Register Star (daily)
3. Rochelle News Leader (semiweekly)
4. The MidWeek, DeKalb (weekly)
5. Sycamore News (weekly)
6. Genoa-Kingston-Kirkland (G-K-K) News (weekly)
7. Hinckley Review (weekly)
8. Ogle County Life, Rochelle (weekly)
9. Oregon Republican Reporter (weekly)

At this juncture it should be noted that the Public Information Office rarely submits any specific mass media release to each and every newspaper listed above. In other words, our standard procedure is to send a general news story, for example, to some, but not usually all, of these area publications.

(continued)

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Categorizing Output to Media

For purposes of conducting this study, we have devised a coded system that will enable us to denote the type and quantity of our office's output disseminated to the previously designated (cf. page one) print media.

We will identify and define our press releases thusly:

A. "N" to signify timely (i.e. "hard") news stories
B. "SE" for special events publicity
C. "Ho" for "hometown" news releases
D. "M" for meeting announcements
E. "F" for classroom/campus features
F. "HI" for human interest articles &/or personality profiles
G. "Pr" for promotional pieces (i.e. quasi-advertisements)
H. "Pic" for photographs (i.e. pictures) *
I. "Mis" for miscellaneous items

* We will only keep track, however, of the photos we distribute separately, rather than those which may accompany some other type of media release.

A series of charts (see ATTACHMENTS for samples) have been developed to help us tally the number of releases sent to each newspaper from week to week for the duration of the research project. There are also columns on these forms that indicate the category, by code, of each article produced and disseminated and whether the piece was used in print as well as to what extent it was presented, if it did get published.

Focal Points of Study

Through our publicity publication survey, we will draw a number of comparisons between the amount of coverage the College receives in various of the nine area newspapers cited earlier in this proposal.

The following are the factors we will examine and, upon completion of the project, attempt to summarize and analyze in a final report:

1. Count the number of releases per week that this office sends to each paper;
2. Identify the kind of article that is being mailed to one or more of the publications listed;
3. Trace the disposition of each release from week to week, correlating the treatment the story has been given (i.e. how it was used, if at all) by the particular newspaper in which the article has appeared;
4. To do #3, note whether editors have handled the release in one of these ways:
   A. Inserted it in its entirety;
   B. Condensed (trimmed) it; or
   C. Chosen not to publish it;
5. Calculate the overall percentage of articles printed in some fashion compared to the quantity of each type of release submitted.

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OFFICE OF
PUBLIC INFORMATION

2-15-88

DATA ON MEDIA RELEASES SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION IN AREA NEWSPAPERS

A report to the Kishwaukee College Marketing Council
from the Office of Public Information

From the first of October thru the end of November this past fall (1987), the Office of Public Information conducted a detailed study focused principally upon the extent of coverage the College receives via the print medium. All area newspapers, both large and small, rural and metropolitan, were included in this survey. Data was gathered by a pre-conceived set of procedures, as outlined in a memo dated 9-10-87, which was distributed to Marketing Council members earlier this month.

Following a retrospective period of close analysis by the Public Information director, the results of this news media study are presented forthwith. In this report a number of outcomes, stemming from our empirical research, will be highlighted.

Some salient observations and conclusions seemed warranted, especially in relation to those results that were not entirely anticipated. Your further comments are, of course, encouraged as well.

A complete set of recap sheets is appended. However, in the event that any reader of this summary might wish to examine the weekly log, comprised of forms maintained in the Public Information office during the two-month period in which the survey was in progress, please request these on-going tabulations from the information officer or staff.

The study itself was precipitated by adoption last fall and incorporation into the CY 87-88 institutional marketing plan of STRATEGY no. 5, under the heading of "Operations," objective #3, page 6.

Overall, a cursory review of data collected throughout the study will reveal that the College Public Information unit distributes a remarkably large number of press releases to newspapers whose circulation encompasses portions of the Kishwaukee district. When one pauses to consider that most (all but three) of the papers serving various segments of our constituency are weekly, community-oriented publications, with an average output of only eight to twelve pages of editorial matter and advertising per issue, our pervasive dissemination of news and feature stories almost verges on the excessive. For example, one of our less localized weeklies, The MidWeek, a tabloid-size publication which is normally left on doorsteps all over DeKalb County, received 42 different releases in just nine (9) weeks. That is about five (5) -- actually, 4.7 -- stories per week, sent to a compact, tightly-edited newspaper that devotes fewer than 20 pages weekly (exclusive of display and classified ads and editorial page items such as letters

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to the editor and a nostalgia column) to coverage of everything newsworthy in the whole county. Our percentage of use of informational materials that we supply to The MidWeek reflects, in my judgment, the glut of Kishwaukee releases that are being discarded by most of our newspaper contacts. In point of fact, I might contend that the College is faring reasonably well to see almost 25 percent of its stories appear in print, in one fashion or another, in The MidWeek.

Another illustration that suggests we may be inundating our media allies, specifically the weeklies, would be the Sycamore News. With 34 releases submitted for publication in a nine-week span, the Sycamore press is on the receiving end of close to four stories per weekly edition, including an occasional photo. Obviously, they are obliged to pick and choose what they have space to print amidst this blitz. Yet, to their credit, the Sycamore editor (an authentic "revolving door" position that has changed hands three times in the past four years) and associates did manage to publish more than one release each week, on balance, although six (6) of those eleven (11) published pieces were boiled down (i.e. reduced in length) to some degree.

All in all, the Information department produced and mailed a total of 48 separate articles, counting five photographs with picture captions, during the two months surveyed. (In other words, no one publication gets every single item disseminated, although we did send The MidWeek all but six of these publicity releases.) Adding together material directed to all nine newspapers, the Information staff mailed 247 pieces of information to the media in nine weeks, or slightly under 27.5 releases week in and week out. Other outcomes of this study lead me to assert that this heavy dose of news and features may be TOO MUCH, if we hope to keep our traditionally high profile for Kishwaukee College in the area weeklies.

Furthermore, it should perhaps be noted that the time frame for our survey is, ironically, a more or less slack period in the Public Information office's year-round publicity and promotional activities. Although our output to the print medium during October and November would seem plentiful by layman's standards, in actuality we normally issue from 30 to 50 percent more news releases during certain other calendar cycles than we do at this mid-semester juncture. In the two-to-three weeks prior to the beginning of a new academic term, to cite another point in time, the average flow of press releases from the College usually increases to approximately six (6) articles per week, up from a median of three-to-four stories released in the time frame covered by our study.

When viewed from that standpoint, it comes as little or no surprise that Kishwaukee receives only minimal coverage at best from the weekly sector of the area's commercial press. There were two newspapers that used more than 50 percent of our releases directed to their news personnel for publication -- the DeKalb Chronicle (76%) and Rochelle News Leader (75%, including my weekly bylined column). Both happen to be papers that are published more than once a week; the Chronicle is a daily, while the News Leader is a semi-weekly, coming out twice each week on Tuesday and Thursday.

Among the weeklies (excluding the aforementioned newspapers, along with the Northern Illinois edition of the Rockford Register Star), the extent of Kishwaukee's visibility thru printed stories varied somewhat within a fairly narrow percentile range, grouped around the figure of a mere 25 percent.

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The Sycamore News led the way by printing 32 percent of the items we sent there, even though most of the stories (11) appearing in the pages of the News were shortened appreciably (6) by the editor. Next came the weekly Oregon Republican Reporter, which used one-quarter (25%) of the 16 releases it received from us.

Comparatively little editing was done with our releases. This, however, could be as much a reflection of the lack of time from which most of the overworked copy editors or managing editors of this vicinity suffer as it is a tribute to the superior quality of our journalistic compositions (or so we would like to think). At any rate, only 36 releases were "tampered with," which customarily amounts to some condensation, out of a tally of 95 which were ultimately published.

Examining what our research divulged in terms of content, it is apparent that virtually every newspaper was partial to publishing two particular kinds of copy. To be precise, their marked preferences seem to favor HO (signifying "hometown") releases and N (an abbreviation of "timely news) stories, among the welter of articles we submitted for their use. "Hometowners," as they are dubbed in the trade, are clearly the type of story most editors are looking for from us as well as from any other source of printable material. This, I would acknowledge, is to be expected, as I'm sure you would agree. Editors elected to publish 60 percent of the hometown releases we prepare and forwarded to them. A total of 20 pieces were coded as hometown articles, with 12 of them making it into print. At least one such release surfaced in every paper on our mailing list, except for the Register Star (to whom we sent only one hometown story) and the Oregon newspaper (which did not receive any). While the final percentage was not as great for "hard" news items, we were successful in getting 19 of these "N" releases in print from a collection of 42 releases on that order that were passed along to the area papers. The rate of use works out to about 45 percent.

In sharp contrast, those releases that sought to promote the College's course offerings or routine educational programs, designated in our coding system as "Pr" articles, were hardly worth the time and effort invested in writing, duplicating, and mailing them. This category of press release yielded a very low return, showing, according to our records, just 25 percent usage. Forty four (44) of these promos were circulated, and 33 of them never saw the proverbial "light of day." The local weeklies appeared to be especially turned off by this publicity activity. Yet even the Chronicle printed a lower number of this kind of subject matter than other sorts of releases. This caveat is also applicable to the Rochelle News Leader, which inserted four (4) of six (6) promotional releases in its issues.

It would seem that editors may well regard publication of course-related information as establishing an unfortunate precedent; namely, that they are equally receptive to increasing quantities of all forms of publicity, even that which can unequivocally be called "puffery." It's a precedent that they apparently did not wish to set. Moreover, it may damage our credibility with the media to persist in releasing these promotional articles to their publications. If nothing else, we can take some solace and even a kind of perverse reassurance from their disdain for puffery --- It provides evidence that most community newspaper editors are capable journalists, at least to the extent that they can distinguish solid news stories from free advertising.

Ed Stoyanoff
February 15, 1988

Kishwaukee College Office of Public Information

Summary of

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#1)

Fall (October - November) 1987

Press releases disseminated the weeks of 10-1-87 to 11-30-87 .

Name of Newspaper	Coded description of articles									Number of releases sent	Number of releases printed	Treatment of releases used		TOTAL % used (by newspaper)
	N	SE	HO	M	F	HI	Pr	Pic	Mis			published in full	edited	
1. DeKalb Chronicle	5	9	3	6	3	1	8	3	0	38	29	21	8	76%
2. Rockford Register Star	5	7	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	20	4	0	4	20%
3. Rochelle News Leader	4	8	3	5	3	1	6	2	0	32	24	18	6	75%
4. The MidWeek	7	9	3	6	3	1	8	4	1	42	10	5	5	24%
5. Sycamore News	6	8	3	6	3	0	7	1	0	34	11	5	6	32%
6. G-K-K News	5	5	3	2	2	0	4	3	0	24	5	2	3	21%
7. Hinckley Review	1	2	1	3	1	0	6	0	0	14	3	0	3	22%
8. Ogle County Life	5	9	3	4	2	1	2	1	0	27	5	4	1	19%
9. Oregon Republican Reporter	4	6	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	16	4	4	0	25%
TOTALS (by column)	42	63	20	37	19	4	44	17	1	247	95	59	36	

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: SUMMARY - recap of ALL newspapers

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	42	19		11	8	23
SE	63	23		16	7	40
HO	20	12		7	5	9
M	57	17		8	9	20
F	19	5		3	2	14
HI	4	2		1	1	2
Pr	44	11		7	4	33
Pic	17	6		6	0	11
Mis	1	0		0	0	1

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: DeKalb Daily Chronicle (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	5	4		2	2	1
SE	9	9		7	2	0
HO	3	2		1	1	1
M	6	4		2	2	2
F	3	1		1	0	2
HI	1	1		1	0	0
Pr	8	6		5	1	2
Pic	3	2		2	0	1
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Rockford Register Star (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	5	2		0	2	3
SE	7	1		0	1	6
HO	1	0		0	0	1
M	2	1		0	1	1
F	2	0		0	0	2
HI	0	0		0	0	0
Pr	2	0		0	0	2
Pic	1	0		0	0	1
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Rochelle News Leader (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	4	3		3	0	1
SE	00	6		4	2	2
HO	3	3		2	1	0
M	5	3		3	0	2
F	3	2		2	0	1
HI	1	1		0	1	0
Pr	6	4		2	2	2
Pic	2	2		2	0	0
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: The Mid Week (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	7	3		2	1	4
SE	9	3		2	1	6
HO	3	1		1	0	2
M	6	2		0	2	4
F	3	1		0	1	2
HI	1	0		0	0	1
Pr	8	0		0	0	8
Pic	4	0		0	0	4
Mis	1	0		0	0	1

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Sycamore News (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	6	4		2	2	2
SE	8	1		1	0	7
HO	3	2		1	1	1
M	6	3		1	2	3
F	3	1		0	1	2
HI	0	0		0	0	0
Pr	7	0		0	0	7
Pic	1	0		0	0	1
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Genoa-Kingston-Kirkland News (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	5	0		0	0	5
SE	5	0		0	0	5
HO	3	2		1	1	1
M	2	1		0	1	1
F	2	0		0	0	2
HI	0	0		0	0	0
Pr	4	1		0	1	3
Pic	3	1		1	0	2
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Hinckley Review (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	1	0		0	0	1
SE	2	1		0	1	1
HO	1	1		0	1	1
M	3	1		0	1	2
F	1	0		0	0	1
HI	0	0		0	0	0
Pr	6	0		0	0	6
Pic	0	0		0	0	0
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Ogle County Life (SUMMARY)

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	5	1		0	1	4
SE	9	2		2	0	7
HO	3	1		1	0	2
M	4	1		1	0	3
F	2	0		0	0	2
HI	1	0		0	0	1
Pr	2	0		0	0	2
Pic	1	0		0	0	1
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA (#2)

Name of Newspaper: Oregon Republican Reporter

Type of Release (encoded)	Tracking Information					
	Number mailed	Number printed	Date/dates appearing	Number used in full	Number edited	Number unpublished
N	4	2		2	0	2
SE	6	0		0	0	6
HO	0	0		0	0	0
M	3	1		1	0	2
F	0	0		0	0	0
HI	0	0		0	0	0
Pr	1	0		0	0	1
Pic	2	1		1	0	1
Mis	0	0		0	0	0

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